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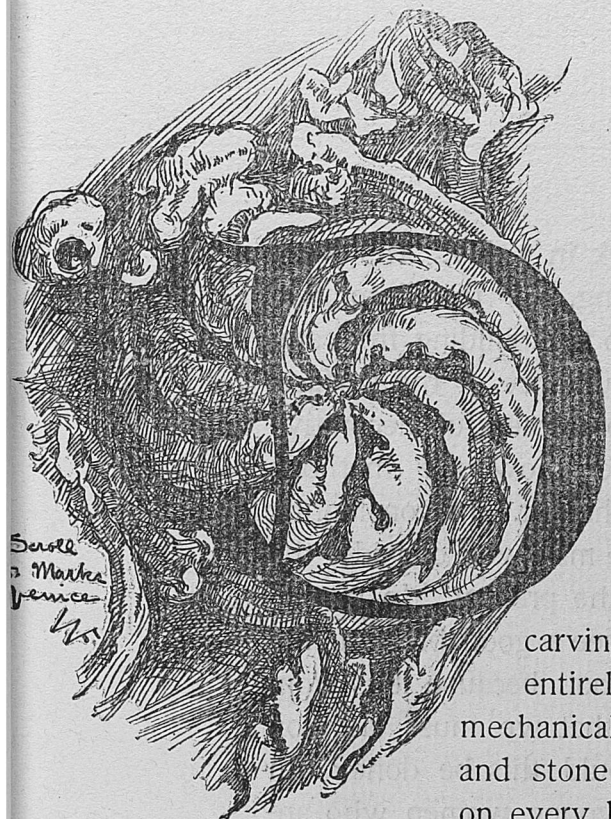
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DECORATIVE SCULPTURE has made considerable progress during recent years. This progress is due to the interest which artists have taken in this work. In order that work be artistic it must be executed by an artist. An architect may draw designs for a sculptural work, yet without the artist to execute them, the result will be unsatisfactory. Stone

carving in this country has been done almost entirely by men who execute the work as a mechanical pursuit. They are at once stone cutters and stone carvers. We have the results before us on every hand.

They are manifestly and decidedly unsatisfactory. The sculptural decoration of the Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance periods was the work of artists. The stone was put in shape, in blocks, by mechanics. The sculptor went to the building, studied its general character, made his designs, possibly modeled them; then cut what he thought was best suited to the time, the place and the occasion. With the training and the instinct of an artist, the result could not but be satisfactory. Wherever there has been successful sculptural decorative work in America it has been done in this way. All other work has been unsuccessful and unsatisfactory, as it has been inartistic.

To illustrate this idea a little further we need only consider the practice which ordinarily prevails in the decoration of our buildings. The design is made in the architect's office; it is figured upon by stone cutters and contractors; and from the drawings the work is cut by one whose only idea is mechanical,—one who is a stone cutter, and not a stone artist; one who has behind his chisel no thought of the beautiful or appreciation of things artistic. He is simply a skillful cutter; he handles his chisel well. He can cut a certain number of

feet of a certain kind of decorative work in a day. His work represents the mechanics of stone carving, not the decorative side; it is not artistic. It adds no value to the building from any point of view. It amounts to a mere disturbance of the surface.

We know the methods which led to successful decorative stone carving in the earlier times. We know the methods which brought about the degeneration of that art. In considering what may be done to affect our future, we may well consider the past and then the moderate success of the present. In traveling through the country we occasionally see a good bit of architectural decoration. We find that it is good because it is from the hand of an artist. Hence, we see that we must develop artists for this kind of work. How should this be done? In our art schools we find young men and young women who are studying to be painters and illustrators. Do we find any who are studying to be stone carvers or artists of that class? In the field of the painter we find an occasional success. It requires a peculiar combination of mind, heart and manual dexterity to make a successful painter. The schools of recent times have developed much skill, but relatively few successes. Looking from the number of pupils in the art schools to the number of successful artists, we realize that many are called but few are chosen. It takes the same class of ability, the same quality of mind, heart and hand, to make a successful stone carver, that it does to make a successful worker on canvas. Here is a field for the art schools; here is a field for the artist.

America, which is relatively a new country, has not reached that stage where it patronizes liberally those arts which are in any way removed from the commercial and the material. The artist's path to success is most readily attained through commercial lines. It need be none the less artistic, none the less beautiful, nor need the calling be any the less high because the art is well patronized. People who own beautiful buildings, who have them constructed as an investment, do this work because it

pays. If they could get the same result by spending half the money, no one questions but they would do it. They realize the value which the mind and hand of the artist add to their expenditure of money. They may be unsuccessful in employing the right kind of ability, but the intention is all right. There is a desire on their part. If our art schools can see their way clear to direct their pupils into the practical, commercial lines which are feasible artistic channels in our country, they will give employment to these enthusiastic young people with high hopes, which hopes can not be fully realized in their present ideal channels. The primary methods of the schools need not be changed. The pupils should draw from casts, from life and from nature, in order to bring the mind into the proper formative artistic channels. From that they may specialize and add the direct, special, technical and other information which is necessary to give proper direction in architectural decorative work. There is no place in the world where one may see the tragedy of art in greater relief than in Paris. There are hundreds of Americans and thousands of people from other sections, studying to be painters. We see only a few who are successful. Hundreds enter the field and only a few become successful artists.

In America the conscientious architect hesitates to put decorative work on his buildings. He fears that he can not get it well executed. Why? Because there are not enough properly trained men to do the work. Most of the work is badly done, and it is badly done because there are not artists to execute it. We would have much more work of this kind if there were those who could properly execute it. The field of decorative art in whatever lines we may consider it is, in America, open and unoccupied.

There is a splendid opportunity for art to make a real and satisfactory advance through the channels which have been here outlined. The value which art may add to commercial investments makes a legitimate channel. Through and by it, the taste

of the people may be elevated. We Americans are disposed to build and decorate great buildings. On the other hand, there is no general impulse to the purchase of pictures or sculptural work, as ordinarily defined and understood. "There is no use to kick against the pricks." The natural, easy channel for art is the one to which the public will most readily lend its means. This is educational, and through it is created a general art instinct. In the earlier history of art in France we did not find it in homes, nor did we find it in paintings. It came through architectural, sculptural and decorative work. That in itself does not signify, however, that we should adopt the same means leading to art development. We should simply adopt the most direct route to a general public understanding of matters of this kind. That, it seems, is the decoration of buildings,—a perfectly natural step. The barbarian builds a shed, digs a cave, and after a time begins to decorate it. His painting and sculpture of a high type come later. The young men and women in our art schools, or a certain number of them, may find proper and worthy employment in the practical decorative branches of art.

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